

VZCZCXRO7796
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEH KI #0136/01 0361145
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051145Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5543
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000136

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: BAS-CONGO CALM, CALL FOR GENERAL STRIKE IN
KINSHASA UNSUCCESSFUL

REF: KINSHASA 134

11. Summary. There were no reports of further violence in the DRC province of Bas-Congo following clashes January 31-February 1 between militant ethnic separatists and Congolese security forces. The death toll is close to 100, predominately civilians. Casualties were significantly higher in the ports of Muanda and Boma, where the military was called in to restore order. SRSW expressed concern about the violence, noting that it threatened future MONUC cooperation with the Congolese military. A call by Jean-Pierre Bemba for a "day of mourning" (likely interpreted to mean a general strike) in Kinshasa on February 5 fell on deaf ears. End summary.

12. (U) No further incidents have been reported in the western province of Bas-Congo following 24 hours of violence January 31-February 1 between Congolese security forces and adherents of the ethnic Kongo separatist group Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) (reftel). The incidents stemmed from the group's dissatisfaction with the results of the January 27 gubernatorial vote, in which its leader was defeated for the position of vice governor. The violence did not significantly affect operation of the province's economic centers, its ports in Matadi, Boma and Muanda.

13. (SBU) Business has returned to normal, but with a stronger security presence in the province's major towns. MONUC has dispatched security reinforcements, with 18 armed Bangladeshi policemen and 78 Ghanaian soldiers arriving February 3 in Matadi and 103 Uruguayan troops setting out the following day for Muanda. MONUC also announced a joint mission to assess the security and humanitarian situation, which is expected to depart February 5 or 6 for approximately a week, according to MONUC's political office.

14. (SBU) Interior Minister Denis Kalume announced February 3 a total of 97 fatalities. The dead are predominately civilian: 16 at Matadi, 26 at Boma, 37 at Muanda and 8 at Songololo. Six are police, four military. The number is expected to rise, since many of the wounded are gunshot victims. A MONUC political officer told us February 3 that the UN's estimate is closer to 130, based on information derived from military as well as police sources.

15. (SBU) Details of the February 2 fighting point to particularly ferocious clashes in Boma and Muanda. A representative of a children's rights group in Muanda told AFP that BDK militants there had rampaged through the streets and set fire to a police station and several government buildings. He reported Congolese troops called in from a nearby base used automatic weapons and rockets in attempting

to restore order. Another resident of Muanda contacted by the Embassy said that militants attacked police guarding public buildings and seized their weapons. The army also was called in at Boma, where militants decapitated a policeman and set vehicles ablaze.

¶6. (SBU) By contrast, most of the casualties in the provincial capital of Matadi resulted from the January 31 confrontation between police and BKD adherents during an attempt by the current governor of the province to confiscate weapons at a Matadi residence. According to a MONUC's Matadi press office, the police turned up some 100 machetes. As many as a dozen civilians were killed. The February 1 violence in the capital was confined to the eastern side of the city.

¶7. (U) MONUC released a February 3 statement calling for calm, and SYSG Swing expressed concern in a Reuters interview about human rights abuses by Congolese security forces, specifically including both the army and police. He said it would be difficult for the UN to work with the Congolese army in the future if they continued to commit such violations. "During the three-year transition, we never had anything like this. What we had in Bas-Congo is very different from anything we had during the transition," Swing told Reuters.

¶8. (U) Defeated presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba, whose party has strong BDK support, called February 2 for a half-day of mourning in Kinshasa on February 5. His call was widely interpreted to mean general strike ("ville morte"). Interior Minister Kalume came out strongly against a general strike, reminding Kinshasa residents repeatedly in nationally-broadcast messages February 2-3 that such strikes

KINSHASA 00000136 002 OF 002

in the early 1990s resulted in looting, violence and instability, as well as the failure of nascent democratization at the time of the Sovereign National Conference. Bemba and his supporters clarified that they were calling for a half-day of national mourning in memory of the Bas-Congo victims. In any case, activity in Kinshasa on February 5 has been normal with businesses, government offices, schools and transport operating as usual.

¶9. (SBU) Comment. Both Kalume and BDK leader Ne Muanda Nsemi have appealed for Bas-Congo residents to follow legal means of recourse regarding the gubernatorial election result. A decision is expected February 8 on an appeal to the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) by Bemba's MLC. The situation is calm for now, but could again deteriorate if the CEI upholds the vote which resulted in its leader's defeat. End comment.
MEECE